

National Elk Refuge News – August 2, 2006

Fishing on Lower Flat Creek



Despite cool temperatures and early morning rain, many anglers spent the opening day of the Lower Flat Creek fishing season testing their skills on the waters within the boundary of the National Elk Refuge. Lower Flat Creek opened for fishing on August 1 and traditionally attracts crowds of anglers during the first several weeks of the season.

Refuge waters support a wild population of Snake River cutthroat trout. These fish are a unique variety of the cutthroat species and are the only trout native to the area. Many of Flat Creek's banks are undercut by water, allowing the trout to stay well hidden. "These fish can be difficult to catch, especially as the season progresses," explained Jim Jones, co-owner of High Country Flies in Jackson. "They become selective on what they eat, and the placement of the fly becomes very important." Angling on Lower Flat Creek and Nowlin Creek is limited to the use of artificial flies only.

High Country Flies fly fishing shop supports quality angling on the Refuge by providing a dip tank at each of the two Flat Creek access points. This discourages the spread of whirling disease, a potentially fatal condition affecting trout that is caused by a microscopic parasite. The parasite has a two-host life cycle involving trout and a common bottom-dwelling tubifex worm. The spore stage of the whirling disease parasite is extremely persistent and easily spread. Infected fish may exhibit a "whirling" motion when swimming, cause by pinched nerves and damage to their cartilage. Anglers can help prevent the spread of the disease by thoroughly washing mud from their boots, waders, fishing equipment and anything that comes in contact with spores or worms found in streambed mud.

A Wyoming State fishing license and conservation stamp are required to fish on the National Elk Refuge; no special Refuge fishing permit is required.



Two anglers use the dip tank to wash their feet before entering the National Elk Refuge.

Lower Flat Creek closes to fishing on October 31.